

Trail Highlights

Deerfield Trail 40

Elevation 4600 to 6200 feet
Length 18 miles
Difficulty Easy to Moderate
Location Deerfield Lake to Rapid Creek and Pactola Reservoir

Lake Loop Trail 40 L

Elevation 5800-6200 feet
Length 10 miles
Difficulty Easy
Location Circles Deerfield Lake

This 28 mile, all season, non-motorized trail complex connects the Deerfield recreation area with the rest of the Black Hills on more than 200 miles of trail, including the Centennial Trail and, when completed, the George S. Mickelson Trail.

Hikers, mountain bikers, horse riders and cross country skiers can enjoy the trails, although not all trail sections are suitable for all uses.

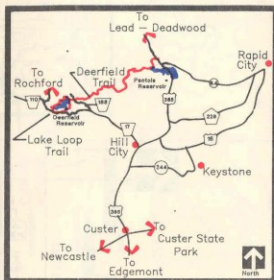
Eight trailheads provide convenient access at intervals of one to nine miles. You can plan trips of an hour, a day or several days. Both trails are marked with brown posts bearing distinctive logos, and are easy to follow.

In addition to great scenery and abundant wildlife, you'll pass by a variety of historic sites including a log flume, cabins, mines, tunnels and railroad grades.

There's no drinking water along the trail, so it's best to carry water with you.

Enjoy your trip and please TREAD LIGHTLY.

Location Map



For More Information

Deerfield & Lake Loop Trails

(Rapid Creek and east)
Mystic Ranger District
803 Soo San Drive
Rapid City, SD 57702
(605) 343-1567

(Slate Creek and west)
Mystic Ranger District
23939 Hwy 385
Hill City, SD 57745
(605) 574-2534

Forestwide Trails

Black Hills National Forest
25041 N. Hwy 16
Custer, SD 57730
(605) 673-9200
TTY (605) 673-9227

Deerfield Trail No. 40

Lake Loop Trail No. 40L



Black Hills
National Forest
South Dakota



Trailheads

Deerfield Trail

- **Kinney Canyon Trailhead** on the Rochford Road, three miles north of the Deerfield Highway.
- **Mystic Trailhead** on the Mystic Road north of the Deerfield Highway, provides access to the George S. Mickelson Trail as well.
- **Silver City Trailhead** at road's end, just above Silver City on Rapid Creek.
- **Deer Creek Trailhead** on the Silver City road just west of US 385, also serves the 111-mile Centennial Trail.

Lake Loop Trail

- **Custer Trails Trailhead** at the campground on the north shore of Deerfield Lake. This is the west end of the Deerfield Trail.
- **North Shore Trailhead** on the upper (northwest) end of Deerfield Lake.
- **Hill Top Trailhead** on the south side of the lake, along Deerfield Road.
- **Gold Run Trailhead**, a mile east of Hill Top.

These trailheads offer parking, and some have restrooms. Other services such as drinking water, picnic and camp sites, and boat ramps are available at Deerfield Lake and Pactola Reservoir.

Along the Trail...



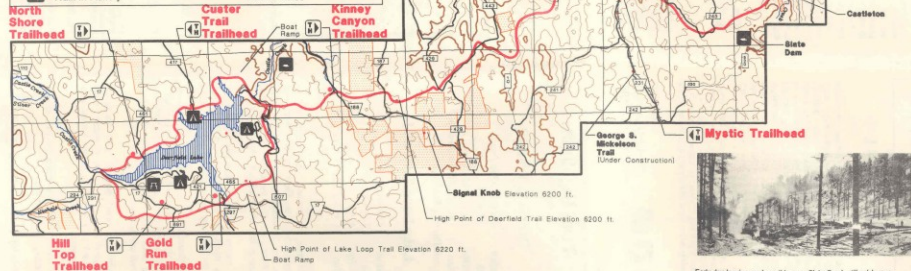
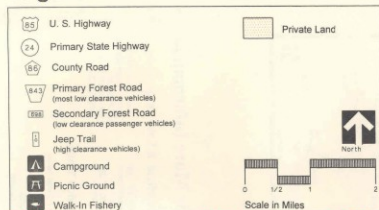
A bird's-eye view of the Warren-Lamb log flume from the rim of Slate Creek Canyon, sometime during the 1920's.

The Custer Expedition explored and mapped the Black Hills in 1874. The Expedition camped on Castle Creek at what would later become Deerfield. In 1876, Gen. George Custer and his Seventh Cavalry troops were killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana.

Deerfield, first called Mountain City, was the site of a brief gold rush. Deerfield's store, school, post office and other buildings were moved in the 1940's to make way for Deerfield Dam.

Mystic and Castleton were founded in the late 1800's as mining camps. Later the railroad came through both towns.

Legend



Railroads were the preferred way to travel through the Black Hills for two generations. The Dakota, Wyoming and Western line was formed in 1901 to provide a direct rail link between Rapid City and the central Black Hills. The line up Rapid Creek required more than 100 bridges in 37 miles. The line was completed to Mystic in 1906. It operated as the Rapid City, Black Hills and Western until closing in 1947, but it's still called the Crouch Line in honor of its builder and first owner, C. D. Crouch.

Canyon City, located on Rapid Creek just below the mouth of Slate Creek, was the site of gold placer mining in the 1880's and '90's.

Silver City, originally called Camp Gorman, was home to 300 people who worked the mines and logged the native timber. Miners took gold, silver, antimony and quicksilver (mercury). A hydropower plant built in 1898 provided power to Rapid City. An even larger plant with a three mile flume was built in 1907.

Pactola Valley included the community of Pactola, Camp Wanzor (a health facility for TB patients), and CCC Camp Pactola. The name "Pactola" derives from the River Pactolus in Greek mythology. When Pactola Dam was built in 1956 these historic sites were buried under the reservoir.



Early day logging such as this near Slate Creek utilized horses and narrow gauge railroads to get the timber out.

Trail Description

This narrative describes the route and attractions along both trails, traveling from west to east.

Deerfield Lake 10 miles



Lake Loop Trail makes a 10-mile circle around Deerfield Lake, a 414 acre reservoir at 5900 feet elevation. From Reynolds Prairie you'll have great views of the lake. To the south, the trail winds through tall pine forest and small meadows. Lake Loop Trail is well suited to all non-motorized uses. You can camp, picnic, fish, swim and boat at Deerfield Lake. There's a fee for camping. At the west end of the lake, 9-mile Fen Trail, a popular horse route, takes you up Castle Creek to wet meadows that support unique plant life.

Deerfield to Mystic 6 miles



Kinney Canyon below Deerfield Dam is a walk-in trout fishery on Castle Creek. Staying on the main trail, you'll reach Kinney Canyon Trailhead in about a mile. East of there the trail reaches its high point of 6200 feet in Slate Prairie, before dropping down Crooked Creek and Whitetail Gulch to Mystic Trailhead. Here, you'll connect with the George S. Mickelson Trail, now under construction by the South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks. Just north are the Castleton dredge mining sites and Mystic, a mining camp turned railroad town. The old Mystic CCC Camp is just south. This part of Deerfield Trail is suitable for all non-motorized trail uses.



Logging camp along the Warren-Lamb flume, Slate Creek Canyon.



Log pond on Slate Creek during 1920's.

Mystic to Slate Creek 6 miles



East from Mystic Trailhead, you'll follow the old Grand Island & Wyoming Central Railroad (later the Burlington Northern, and now the George S. Mickelson Trail, currently under construction). The trail passes through dense hardwoods including aspen, birch and alder before making a fairly steep climb up Lind Gulch to the south. Crossing into the Slate Creek drainage, you'll pass close to Slate Creek Dam, another good fishing spot. The country changes dramatically now, as the trail turns north and enters the sheer walls of Slate Creek Canyon for the next three miles. You'll pass Black Tom Mine, Flannigan Cabin and the Warren-Lamb flume, which carried logs to the railroad near Canyon City in the 1920's. Hikers will cross Slate Creek 34 times on slab-sawn log bridges; horses can cross almost anywhere. This section of the trail isn't recommended for cross country skiing because of the numerous stream crossings.

Rapid Creek 3 miles



This level section of trail, at an elevation of just over 4600 feet, is the easiest on the whole trail. White spruce and ponderosa pine tower over the now quiet Rapid City, Black Hills and Western rail line. You'll follow this easy route, also called the Crouch Line, from west of Canyon City downstream to Silver City. This roadless stretch of Rapid Creek is a popular walk-in fishery known for its nice brown trout. Even if you don't fish, you'll enjoy the natural beauty of this deep, rocky canyon. Silver City Trailhead is at the end of the road, just west of the town of Silver City. This section of trail is suited to hikers, bikers and horses, plus families with young children and older walkers. Wide wood bridges cross the creek several times. You can cross country ski when snow conditions permit.

Silver City to Deer Creek Trailhead 3 miles



Below Silver City the canyon widens and Rapid Creek empties into Pactola Reservoir. The trail passes near Jenney Gulch Picnic Area and then makes a long gradual climb through the pines to Deer Creek Trailhead on the Silver City Road just off US 385. At Deer Creek you'll connect with the 111-mile Centennial Trail, and you'll have to make a choice: north toward Boxelder Forks, Dalton Lake and Bear Butte, or south to Sheridan Lake, Black Elk Wilderness, Custer State Park and Wind Cave National Park. This east end of Deerfield Trail is open to all non-motorized travel, although cross country skiing might be marginal. Black Hills National Forest Visitor Center is close by, on the south end of Pactola Dam. The center is open in the summer and has informative exhibits on Black Hills natural history.

Trail Signing

Lake Loop Trail



Deerfield Trail



These distinctive logos are placed at regular intervals along the trails to help you find your way.



Logs decked along the flume waiting transport to the railroad.